

Samson Gilbert Daykin (1886-1939)

Brief biography

Wearing his flat cap, Gilbert as he was known, featured on the front page of the Daily Mirror on the 3rd of August 1931. He had an all too brief brush with fame before his death eight years later.

The national publicity surrounding his two week visit to the London home of the Duchess of Portland, was as a result of her encouragement of his art and enabled him to visit the London galleries to gain inspiration from the great masters.

How had the man from Platts Common Barnsley, born to a mining family, achieved this degree of fame?

He was born in 1886 to Noah and Annie (Brearley), who had married in Wombell in 1880. Gilbert was one of twelve children of the marriage.

The family moved to 13 William Street and then 25 George Street Worsborough Bridge before settling in the Derbyshire villages of Shirebrook and Church Warsop in about 1900.

Working underground at Warsop Main Colliery, Gilbert married Lilian Hayes in 1910 and they had three children.

Gilbert had an overwhelming desire to paint seemingly around the time of his marriage, and settled happily into painting the countryside surrounding the Welbeck Estate and also underground mining scenes.

Some of his work was bought by the Staveley Coal and Iron Company and the local Miners' Welfare Committee offered Gilbert a bursary to enable him to attend, part time, at the Nottingham College of Art. His work was also brought to the attention of the local M.P. the Hon. Malcolm MacDonald who organized for it to be shown in Worksop and he became a friend and supporter of Gilbert. The publicity followed, but Gilbert could never afford to give up mining and concentrate on his art as he would have dearly loved to do. Gilbert painted frantically only pausing when his daughter died in 1936 when the spirit seems to have left him.

By 1939 he had regained the urge to paint but, in that year, having lived much of his life in fear of a mining accident, Gilbert died on 20th December 1939 at Warsop Main Colliery when he and five colleagues were trapped by over 5,000 tons of rock-fall. Just one hour later and his last shift before Christmas would have finished.

His son donated his underground mining scenes to the Science Museum, London. There are three of these paintings in the exhibition.

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